



Breaking the Silence for Our Neighbors June 2023

Stigmas, myths, and stereotypes surround our unhoused neighbors and those facing homelessness. Housing security is a community-wide issue, and it is important for everyone to be informed about the root causes of homelessness within the Douglas, Sarpy, and Pottawattamie Counties so that our work within the Continuum of Care (CoC) creates long-lasting, equitable solutions for the well-being of our community.

There are many factors that contribute to how people experience housing insecurity within our community. Our friends, loved ones, and neighbors face varying and unique circumstances that can impact their housing stability. Here are some of the most common factors.

Accessible Housing is a prevalent issue in our community and across the nation. With 11 million households paying at least half of their income toward housing, their risk of housing insecurity is significantly high. As the gap between the rise of housing costs and stagnant incomes widen, the result is that more of our neighbors are experiencing a lack of access to affordable housing. Many of our neighbors with disabilities and our elderly community have a limited income stream, increasing their risk of experiencing housing insecurity.

Domestic Violence is another reason our neighbors and friends may be experiencing housing instability. Understanding the issue of housing insecurity means understanding that for many individuals and families, domestic violence is the immediate factor to accessing a safe, affordable, quality home. The immediate need of a survivor fleeing domestic violence is safety. According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH), in 2022, approximately 11% of all Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing, and Safe Haven beds in unhoused service systems were targeted for survivors of domestic violence and their families.

Health is another reason our friends and neighbors may be facing housing insecurity. Conditions such as diabetes and heart disease are found at high rates among our unhoused neighbors. In fact, an individual can experience chronic housing insecurity when their health condition worsens. When health conditions become disabling, individuals have trouble maintaining stable housing without assistance. For our neighbors and friends experiencing housing insecurity, it's challenging for them to gain access to treatment and preventive care due to the lack of insurance.

Racial Disparities are a harsh reality and play a major role regarding housing insecurity in our community. According to NAEH, the most striking disparity is found among our Black and African American neighbors, who represent 13% of the general population, but account for 37% of those experiencing homelessness, and more than 49% of unhoused families with children. This population has been historically and systemically denied rights and socioeconomic opportunities. Thus, our BIPOC friends experience homelessness at higher rates making up a disproportionate majority of our unhoused population. Other minority groups, including Indigenous and Latino people in our community, also share similar histories and experiences with housing insecurity.

If you or a neighbor are facing housing instability or feel that their rights to housing have been violated, please connect with MACCH through our Access Points and CoC organizations in our community. We have a network of resources to prevent individuals and families from facing housing insecurity and gain access to safe, quality housing. We would like our neighbors and community to know they are not alone. Everyone's circumstances are unique, MACCH and its CoC partners are committed to addressing each of our neighbors' needs.

Follow us on Facebook (@MACCHOMAHA) and Twitter (@MACCH_OMA) to stay connected and engage in our community's collective response to housing insecurity in Douglas, Sarpy, and Pottawattamie Counties.